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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/939,535	08/24/2001	Lori Tassone Holmes	KCC-16,221	2474

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EXAMINER	
STEPHENS, JACQUELINE F	

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3761	

DATE MAILED: 02/23/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/939,535	HOLMES ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Jacqueline F. Stephens	3761	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *12/5/05*.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,4,6,9-12,14-20,26-33,35-43,57,58,60-63, 65, 68-70,72-77* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) *1,2,4,6,9-12,14-20,27-33 and 35-42* is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *26,43,57,58,60-63,65,68-70 and 72-77* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments filed 12/5/05 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues it is inappropriate and incorrect for the examiner to interpret any portion of the bottom surface as a surface area as applicant has defined the surface area as an entire area of the layer. The examiner respectfully disagrees. Applicant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of applicant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies (i.e., an upper layer having an entire bottom surface area that is greater than an entire surface area of a top surface of a lower layer) are not recited in the rejected claim(s). In claim 26, Applicant has defined a bottom surface as encompassing an entire surface of the upper layer that faces the lower layer and the lower layer having a top surface that encompasses an entire surface of the lower layer that faces the bottom surface of the upper layer. The claim then recites "*a* surface area" of the bottom surface is greater than "a surface area" of the top surface. 'A surface are' has not been defined by an 'entire surface area'. Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993). Therefore, the examiner maintains the interpretation of any portion of the surface of the layers as "a surface area" since an entire surface area of the layers has not been positively recited.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

> A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –
>
> (b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

3. Claims 26, 57-58, 60-63, and 68 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Everett et al. WO 99/17695.

As to claim 26, Everett discloses an absorbent material comprising: an upper layer 48 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material and a lower layer 50 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material (page 20, line 26 through page 21, line 24); wherein the absorbent material has a thickness in a range of between 0.5 and 7.5 mm (page 13, lines 9-12), and an absorbent capacity between about 14 and 40 grams 0.9 w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19), and the lower layer has a greater density than the upper layer (page 21, lines 10-24; page 78, line 6-9 and page 80, lines 3-5. Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and 75wt%, which includes a component of the range of between 10 and 80% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16). As to the limitation of the upper layer comprising a bottom surface encompassing an entire surface of the upper layer that faces the lower layer, the examiner interprets this limitation as the bottom surface of the upper layer includes the entire surface of the upper layer that faces the lower layer,

which is inherent in Everett. Additionally, the examiner interprets the lower layer having a top surface encompassing an entire surface of the lower layer that faces the bottom surface of the upper layer to mean the lower layer has a top surface that includes the entire top surface that faces the upper layer, which is also inherent in Everett. As to the limitations of the upper layer being drum -formed and the lower layer being air laid, these limitations are directed to a process of making the article. "Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted). MPEP 2113.

The upper layer 48 comprises a bottom surface facing the lower layer 50 (Figure 1). Applicant has not defined the surface area relative to the claims. Giving the broadest reasonable interpretation, the examiner considers any portion of the bottom surface of the upper layer as a surface area, which can be larger than any portion of the top surface of the lower layer, thereby meeting the claim limitations.

As to claim 57, Everett discloses an upper layer of density 0.03 gcm^3 - .4 g/cm^3 (page 78, lines 7-8). Everett discloses the lower layer has a density of not less than about 0.1g/cm^3 and not more than about 0.3 g/cm^3 (page 80, lines 3-4).

As to claim 58, Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and 75wt%, which includes the range of between 20 and 70% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16).

As to claim 60, see page 13, lines 9-12.

As to claim 61, Everett discloses the absorbent material has an absorbent capacity of at least 16 grams w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19).

As to claim 62, Everett discloses two or more layers (page 25, lines 34-35.

As to claims 63, Everett discloses a plurality of layers on the upper layer (page 79, claim 12).

As to claim 68, Everett discloses various forms of the absorbent article, see page 6, lines 16-25 directed toward an intended use of the article.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the

invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

6. Claims 43, 65, 69-70, 72-77 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Everett in view of Osborn, III.

As to claims 43 and 65, Everett discloses an absorbent garment comprising: a chassis defining a waist opening and first and second leg openings: the chassis including a liquid-permeable body side liner, an absorbent assembly, and a substantially liquid-impermeable outer cover layer (page 15, lines 9-18). Everett discloses an absorbent material comprising,: an upper layer 48 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material and a lower layer 50 including pulp fluff and superabsorbent material (page 20, line 26 through page 21, line 24); wherein the absorbent material has a thickness in a range of between 0.5 and 7.5 mm (page 13, lines 9-12), and an absorbent capacity between about 14 and 40 grams w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19), and the lower layer has a greater density than the upper layer (page 21, lines 10-24; page 78, line 6-9 and page 80, lines 3-5).

The limitations of the upper layer being drum -formed and the lower layer being air laid are directed to a process of making the article. "Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted). MPEP 2113.

Everett does not disclose the lower layer comprises a plurality of separate pieces placed in desired location of the absorbent assembly. Osborn discloses an absorbent product with a segmented absorbent core for the benefit of providing independent segments each able to move in the Z-direction without constraints and takes into account the front-to-back differences in the shape of the body of the wearer and thus allows a more accurate and comfortable fit (Osborn, Abstract and col. 2, lines 13-20). One of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated by the teachings of Osborn to modify the lower layer to have a segmented core for the benefits taught in Osborn.

As to claim 69, Everett discloses an upper layer of density 0.03 gcm^3 - .4 g/cm^3 (page 78, lines 7-8). Everett discloses the lower layer has a density of not less than about 0.1g/cm^3 and not more than about 0.3 g/cm^3 (page 80, lines 3-4).

As to claim 70, Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and

75wt%, which includes the range of between 20 and 70% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16). Everett discloses the upper layer comprises between 20 and 75wt%, which includes a component of the range of between 10 and 80% superabsorbent (page 78, lines 15-16).

As to claim 72, see page 13, lines 9-12.

As to claim 73, Everett discloses the absorbent material has an absorbent capacity of at least 16 grams 0.9 w/v% saline solution per gram of absorbent material (page 23, lines 11-19).

As to claim 74, Everett discloses two or more layers (page 25, lines 34-35.

As to claims 75 and 76, the limitations of the upper layer being drum -formed and the lower layer being air laid are directed to a process of making the article. "Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted). MPEP 2113.

As to claims 77, Everett discloses a plurality of layers on the upper layer (page 79, claim 12).

Conclusion

1. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jacqueline F. Stephens whose telephone number is (571) 272-4937. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 9:00-5:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tanya Zalukaeva can be reached on (571) 272-1115. The fax phone

number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Jacqueline F Stephens
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3761

February 16, 2006